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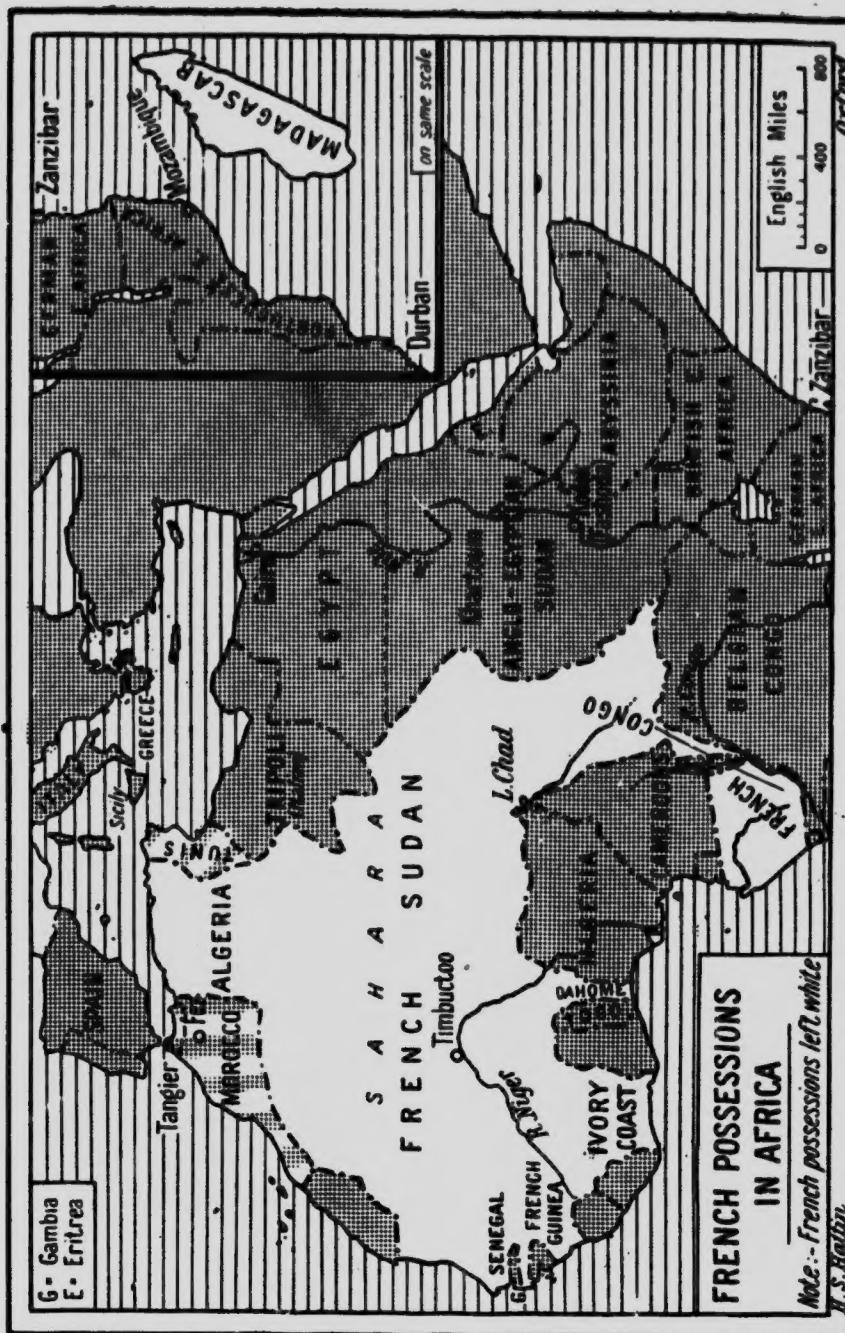
FRENCH POLICY
SINCE 1871

BY
F. MORGAN
AND
H. W. C. DAVIS

SECOND IMPRESSION

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FRENCH POLICY SINCE 1871

THE foreign policy of France, since 1871, is a fascinating subject. The history of France has always been the history of her foreign policy ; for it is in their dealings with foreign friends and enemies that the French people have expressed most clearly their ambitions and ideals. Not that the thoughtful Frenchman has ever been indifferent to problems of domestic government and social organization. It was the French statesman Colbert who, as long ago as the seventeenth century, first reduced to a system the protection by the State of native industries. The wave of enthusiasm for democratic government, which swept over Europe in the early nineteenth century, spread outwards from France. More recently French thinkers have taken a foremost place among the pioneers of industrial co-operation and of socialism. But it would be difficult, if not impossible, to convince the French people as a whole that the supreme duty of the State is merely to secure good and just government for all its subjects, or an equitable distribution of material wealth. From the French point of view, a state which pursued no other objects would be as contemptible as a private individual who cherished no ambitions beyond those of earning an assured income and of leading a comfortable existence.

The Frenchman holds that the State, no less than the individual, should seek renown (*la gloire*) in performing

'deeds of noble note'. The French conception of glory has been modified from one age to another, sometimes for the worse, sometimes for the better. But, until comparatively recent times, the noble deeds expected of a powerful French Government were always deeds of war, to be accomplished in the name of some cherished national idea. Under Louis XIV the nation fought for natural frontiers, under Louis XV for colonies and commerce. The statesmen of the French Revolution roused their fellow countrymen to the most astounding military efforts by announcing that France would compel all other nations to be free in the same sense as herself. Under Napoleon I, and more obscurely under his nephew, Napoleon III, France aspired to impose her suzerainty by force of arms upon the whole of Western Europe. Since 1871 times have changed, and with them the temper of France. In the last forty-three years she has produced some visionary soldiers who dreamed of a new French ascendancy in Europe; but their vapourings have been nowhere more mercilessly satirized than in their own country. The French people are wise enough to know that they can no longer hope to overrun Europe, imposing their authority or their ideas of government at the point of the bayonet. They do not hope for this, and they have even ceased to wish that it were possible.

Still it is not to be expected that old traditions should be entirely extirpated in a moment, even by such a catastrophe as the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. That disaster made it imperative for France to maintain a huge military establishment, as a safeguard against future attacks; therefore, since 1871, the majority of Frenchmen have still been trained as soldiers, and still the influence of French military leaders upon national policy

is sometimes greater than the wisdom of their counsels. The French nation, as might be expected of a military nation, are keenly sensitive to any slight ; they have not always avoided the mistake of supposing that any opposition to their cherished schemes must be the outcome of malevolence. They have ceased to think of war as the obvious means of furthering national interests ; but they are by no means so pacific as the Anglo-Saxon peoples, who have hitherto dispensed with conscription. The foreign policy of France still strikes the average Englishman as too audacious and too restless. The French are less cautious than ourselves in counting the cost of foreign enterprises ; what we call common prudence they would call want of spirit. And they are the more disposed to run great risks for relatively slight advantages, because they still believe that their national credit depends upon their foreign policy. The Minister of Foreign Affairs in a French Government is expected to pursue a policy which is not only safe and dignified, but something more. He must have a clear-cut programme, which holds out the promise of tangible results (for the French mind is attached to the concrete), and which at the same time is based upon some broad principle of right, or some far-reaching theory of the proper course of national development. Frenchmen do not demand that their foreign policy should be aggressive, in the sense of constituting a menace to other civilized states. But they are imbued with the idea that great states always are, and always must be engaged in competition, in a race for the acquisition of allies, of markets, of spheres of influence. They would feel humiliated if they thought that France was dropping out of the race from want of foresight, from timidity, or from lack of interest. It is not the

prize of victory which they value so much as the consciousness that their country is honourably distinguished in the competition.

Once we have grasped the French point of view, we have surmounted the chief difficulty under which an Englishman labours when he tries to understand French policy. There are other difficulties, and they are not to be underrated. The materials upon which to found a thorough judgement are not yet available. It is probable that France is bound by secret treaties, the nature of which we can only guess. The published treaties to which she is a party will not be fully intelligible until we know much more about her aims in subscribing to them, and her share in framing their provisions. These, however, are difficulties which beset us equally when we turn from France to the consideration of the foreign policy of any other modern state. The peculiar difficulty, in studying French diplomacy, is to apprehend and to keep in mind the French point of view; it is so different from that of the Englishman, whose insular position leads him to think of foreign relations as a regrettable necessity, and to demand of his statesmen that they shall only intervene in foreign complications when some very obvious and very pressing interest is at stake. For England, perhaps, this is the wiser rule of action. But the course which is safest for an island power may be highly dangerous for a continental power; and a theory of the mission of the State which suits the Anglo-Saxon temperament may be altogether unsuitable to Latin peoples. We should not only endeavour to understand how a Frenchman thinks about foreign policy; we should also do our best to appreciate the reasons which make him differ so widely from ourselves upon this topic.

Remembering then that, in a Frenchman's eyes, there is a world of difference between activity and aggression, between stealing a march upon a rival and aiming a blow at his existence, between winning a race and inflicting an injury, let us attempt to form some judgement of French foreign policy in the last forty years or so. Has it been aggressive? Has it carried competition to the point of wanton and unforgivable provocation? Has the mainspring of it been the desire to revenge upon the German Empire the disgraces and the losses of 1870? Or has it aimed at restoring French prestige, in a less dangerous way, by discovering and developing new fields for French influence? These are questions which cannot be answered with dogmatic confidence until the archives of all the Great Powers have been thrown open. But they are questions on which it is important that we should form a provisional judgement from such material as is available. For they concern the honour and the trustworthiness of a cherished ally.

These questions can best be answered in a brief historical survey. It is a complicated story that we have to tell; but it becomes simpler if one observes that there are three well-marked phases through which French policy has passed since 1871; and that in each successive stage there is one national interest which exercises a predominating influence upon the minds of French statesmen and determines their attitude towards other powers.

(1) From 1871 to 1880 the key-note of French statesmanship was expressed in the words, Recuperation and Reorganization. In these years the Republic, as it exists to-day, was founded and endowed with a fixed constitution. The Republic rapidly paid off the enor-

mous indemnity (£240,000,000) which the victorious German Empire had exacted. The army and the defences of the eastern frontier were put upon a satisfactory footing ; and these were only the more striking manifestations of the new spirit of reform which was in the air. The nation, no less than the Government, set to work with amazing energy and success to build up national prosperity on new foundations. The French put away their old illusions and vaingloriousness ; they cultivated the clearness of thought and thoroughness in action which had given victory to the Germans. It was for France a time of melancholy, of regrets, of stern self-examination, but any patriotic Frenchman, as he looks back upon the work of those ten years, must feel that there never was a more creditable period in the history of his people.

In foreign policy France did little during the years 1871–80. She stood in constant dread, perhaps exaggerated dread, of a new attack from Germany. The French people would never formally acknowledge the title of the German Empire to Alsace and Lorraine ; it was hardly to be expected that they should, while the population of the ceded provinces remained obstinately French in sympathies—as it does to this day in Alsace at least, if not also in Lorraine. But on the whole the French people were wise enough to obey the warning of Gambetta, their most popular statesman in those days, who said : ‘Think of it (*Revanche*) always and never speak of it.’ A German historian complains that the German Empire, from the day of its birth, has always been ‘burdened with a French mortgage’, that is, with the danger implied in the latent hostility of France ; and Bismarck taught his countrymen, only too well, the lesson that, for their own safety, France must be kept

in a state of weakness. France, however, did not allow herself the dangerous luxury of translating her natural resentment into action. There was, it is true, a prospect of a new Franco-German war in 1875 ; but it arose from a feeling, which prevailed in German military circles, that France had been let off too lightly in 1871, and that it was advisable to 'bleed her white'. War was averted by the intervention of Russia and of England ; and Bismarck's apologists now allege that he never intended to do more than scare the French out of any thoughts of revenge which she might still be harbouring. Whatever his intentions, he had certainly acted in such a way as to give France every reason for strengthening her defences and for watching the slightest move of Germany with deep suspicion.

(2) In 1881 the French showed the world that they had at last recovered confidence and strength. That year saw the French occupation of Tunis and the beginning of the new colonial policy which, from that date to 1904, was the main interest of French statesmen. For twenty-three years France was engaged in acquiring and developing tropical or sub-tropical territories, partly in Africa and partly in the Far East. These new possessions were, and are, as Bismarck once sardonically remarked, 'colonies without colonists'. Since she lost Canada in the eighteenth century France has never aspired to become, like Great Britain, a mother of new nations. Indeed, if she had the aspiration, she would find it difficult to provide the emigrants, or to secure a land in the temperate zones where they could settle. But both in Africa and in Asia she has copied with remarkable success the model afforded by the Indian Empire.

At the fall of Napoleon there remained to France, of all the colonies which she had established in the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries, only a few trading posts in India, a few of the West Indian Islands, the islets of St. Pierre and Miquelon off the coast of Newfoundland, and Cayenne (French Guiana) on the east coast of South America. When France began to think once more of colonial enterprises, it was to the Mediterranean that she first turned her gaze. Between 1830 and 1847 Algeria was completely subdued ; and it was no mere accident that the Suez Canal was originally planned in France and was finally constructed (1859-69) by De Lesseps, a retired French diplomat. Napoleon III probably dreamed, as his uncle Napoleon I had dreamed, of a French protectorate in Egypt ; he and his advisers certainly hoped that the Suez Canal would make the Mediterranean a highway for French trade with the Far East. Under Napoleon III France acquired Cochin-China, thus staking out for herself a considerable sphere of influence in Asia. But Napoleon III was distracted between many and conflicting schemes ; there was no consistent plan in his colonial enterprises.

The Republic, in and after 1881, pursued a more energetic colonial policy than Napoleon III, because it was not distracted by any hopes of aggrandizement on the European mainland. Tunis was the first considerable prize to be gained (1881) ; and Tunis was occupied with the goodwill of England. At the European Congress of Berlin (1878) Lord Salisbury said to the French representative : 'Do what you think fit in Tunis ; England will offer no opposition.' Neither did Germany oppose the occupation. In fact Bismarck had prompted Lord Salisbury's offer, in the hope of diverting France from the pre-occupation of *Revanche*. It seemed a remarkable piece of good fortune, an omen of returning prosperity, that such a prize could be obtained

without exciting the jealousy of the two powers whom Frenchmen regarded as most jealous of their nation.

The occupation of Tunis has indeed proved a landmark in the history of French colonial enterprise; though, like many other notable events, it has not produced the consequences which were predicted at the time. Tunis did not become a stepping-stone to Egypt, for reasons which we shall narrate hereafter; and, now that Italy has occupied Tripoli, to the east of Tunis, it is improbable that France will ever succeed in drawing nearer to the Nile delta. On the other hand, the possession of Tunis gave France a stronger claim to the Sahara and the Western Sudan, when the powers interested in the partition of Africa agreed to recognize the 'doctrine of the hinterland', the principle that any power which possesses the sea-coast is entitled to the inland districts of which that coast is the natural outlet. Further, it was in Tunis that the French first proved the value of a remarkably flexible and inexpensive system of colonization—the method of establishing a protectorate which allows the native forms of government to continue, under careful supervision, but gives the fullest opportunities for 'peaceful penetration' by the explorer and the merchant. It is a method which France has applied on an extensive scale since 1881. In 1885 she applied it to Madagascar in the Indian Ocean, and to the states of Tonkin and Annam in the Indo-Chinese peninsula. Quite recently (1912) she has applied it to the larger half of Morocco.

It is easier to pass a sweeping condemnation on such a method than to recognize the fact that, under certain circumstances, it affords the only way out of an intolerable position. Protectorates of this kind have too often been created to protect imaginary interests, to exploit unoffending populations, or to gain a monopoly of

commerce. But they are often as beneficial to the country which is annexed as to the power which annexes ; with one or two glaring exceptions, they have always meant the establishment of better justice, better police, and greater security of person and of property. Every one must admit that Egypt, for example, is infinitely better governed under the British supremacy than she had been at any time since the Mohammedan conquest ; and the history of independent Morocco between 1904 and 1912 is the best apology for the protectorate which France has now established in that country. Nor is it true to say that these protectorates, however justly exercised, are always founded upon an unjust usurpation. No one objects when the subjects of a civilized power begin to settle and to trade in a country like Tunis or Morocco. Every one agrees that, if these settlers are ill-used by the native government, their mother-country has the right to demand redress, and, if necessary, a reform of the laws and institutions which have produced oppression or have failed to prevent it. Why then should it be called unjust if, in the last resort, when protests have proved ineffectual, the offended power undertakes to reform and to supervise the offending government ? No doubt the colonizing powers of Europe have sometimes alleged a grievance which did not exist, or have made a mountain of a molehill, in order to justify the establishment of a protectorate. But each case must be judged upon its merits ; and we have no right to denounce France as a robber simply because she has become the protector of numerous uncivilized or half-civilized communities.

This, however, is a digression. If the French policy of protectorates has created difficulties between France and other powers, this is not because those powers disapprove

of the system, which they are equally ready to apply when opportunities occur, but because they complain that France has usurped a right of intervention which properly belonged to themselves, or that she has protected her own interests by destroying those of her rivals. The occupation of Tunis led at once to a complaint of this kind from Italy, who regarded Tunis as lying within her lawful sphere of interest, both on the score of geographical position and also because Italians were heavily interested in the foreign trade with Tunis. It was natural too that a country which had been a Roman province, and was now politically derelict, should be claimed as a suitable outlet for the trade and the colonial ambitions of the young Italian kingdom. Since France turned a deaf ear to these complaints, Italy proceeded to form the Triple Alliance with Austria and Germany (1882); and she was encouraged by her powerful allies to prosecute the feud. Until 1898 there was constant friction between Italy and France. Mutual ill will found expression in a war of tariffs, and in 1888 the two powers were on the brink of war.

Happily that crisis was averted, the feud has been healed; and Italy is now indemnified with Tripoli for her disappointment in Tunis. Still we must call it an ominous feud. It showed how inevitably the race for new markets and new spheres of influence was leading the European powers into quarrels which reacted on the European situation. Of such disputes France has had more than her full share—not because she has been more lawless than her rivals, but because she has been more energetic and adventurous. In the last thirty years no country has produced so many pioneers who have worked heart and soul to extend the influence of their native country by systematic exploration. There is something romantic,

indeed we might almost say fantastic, in the rapid extension of French power over the hinterlands of North-West Africa. Sometimes France has appropriated with surprising avidity a desert diversified by small and rare oases. Sometimes she has based a claim to more fertile districts upon the possession of a tiny outpost, hundreds of miles beyond the effective jurisdiction of any of her colonial governors. But she has not been singular in her methods. Her fault, if it be a fault, has consisted in the adroit circumvention of slower-witted rivals. Germany has never forgiven France for the skill with which France enveloped and hemmed in the German colony of the Cameroons, although the French success was ratified in 1894 by a convention between the two governments.

But until 1904 the most serious colonial rivalry of France was that with England. It was stimulated no doubt by memories of older quarrels in the eighteenth century. Frenchmen felt that, both in Canada and in India, the English had reaped where they had not sown. France entertained profound suspicions of English colonial policy, imagining that England was restlessly and insatiably ambitious of new conquests. These suspicions were strengthened by the English occupation of Egypt (1882), which was begun as a temporary measure of precaution, to protect the great European interests in that country when they were threatened by a native revolution, and which has continued ever since. As a matter of fact the suspicions were unfounded. Mr. Gladstone, the Prime Minister of that day, was sincerely anxious to keep England clear of the complications which were bound to follow if we interfered in Egypt. He desired the joint intervention of all the interested powers; and England only undertook the

task single-handed when every power, France among the rest, had declined to share in it. England remained in Egypt with the intention of restoring the native system of government to tolerable efficiency; but, before she had completed the work of reorganization, the new and formidable problem of the Sudan was thrust upon her; and though the solution of this problem was brought nearer by the capture of Khartoum (1898), the evacuation of Egypt has been indefinitely postponed.

It was long before France could bring herself to accept the English occupation as something more than a temporary expedient. As late as 1898 a singularly bold attempt was made by a French explorer, Major Marchand, to occupy the basin of the White Nile. The French flag was hoisted at Fashoda just when the English forces were entering Khartoum, three hundred miles lower down the river. The English refused to recognize the legitimacy of the French occupation, and the dispute was at length settled in England's favour; but not before it had threatened to produce a war in Europe. Happily this episode, which both countries have agreed to forget, was the last rumble of a storm-cloud which for sixteen years had overhung every frontier, from Western Africa to Eastern Asia, where French and English interests came into close contact. As Italy had become reconciled to France, so France entered by degrees upon friendlier relations with England.

The causes of the Anglo-French reconciliation were manifold. Undoubtedly one cause was the respect which each nation felt for the characteristic virtues of the other. One is tempted to say that the English and the French were predestined to be allies. No nations could be more unlike; but the very unlikeness made for mutual

respect. Englishmen have always admired the elasticity of the French temperament and the idealism of French policy. Frenchmen, on their side, have not been slow to recognize the pacific and reasonable character of the English, their readiness to accept a compromise and to abide loyally by an agreement. In the colonial sphere it has often happened that English interests have clashed with those of France. But a way of settlement, honourable to both parties, has always been discovered; and France has never had occasion to complain that England regards the prosperity of a competitor as an insult or a menace.

(3) The third period, from 1904 to 1914, has been remarkable for the steady and deliberate preparations of France to face the German peril. For at least ten years her statesmen have not only feared invasion, but have been pretty well informed of the plan of campaign which the German General Staff would pursue. Indeed the more militant of German newspapers, and the leading exponents of German strategy, have not troubled to disguise the intentions of the German governing class. The only doubts in French minds have been as to the date at which the German plan would be put in execution, and the exact nature of the pretext which would be alleged. It was, however, reasonable to expect that the blow would be struck when German military and naval expenditure had reached the maximum permitted by the state of the public revenue; and that the occasion would be found in the Franco-Russian alliance which the Pan-German party have affected to treat as a crime against European civilization.

The Russian alliance was in fact projected and concluded during the years 1891-7, when France asked for nothing more than freedom from continental embarrass-

ments and the fullest opportunity of developing French interests in Africa and Asia. Russia stood in need of loans from French financiers. France on her side felt that a Russian alliance would protect her against Germany, and might be a valuable support in her colonial rivalries with England. Some such measure of insurance was necessary to France; her population was becoming stationary, her colonial policy required the maintenance of a strong navy, and her military resources, relatively to those of Germany, were rapidly declining. But even in Bismarck's time the German Empire had watched with apprehension the growth of the Russian power on its eastern flank; and this apprehension was intensified as German statesmen, after Bismarck's fall, committed themselves more and more deeply to the support of Austrian designs in the Balkans. It was impossible for Russia to tolerate the prosecution of those designs, which involved the destruction or the mutilation of small Slavonic states. Germany and Austria-Hungary were steering a straight course towards a racial war of Teuton against Slav. They counted themselves superior to Russia in military organization, and were not afraid so long as Russia stood alone. But they feared that the Dual Alliance of France and Russia would be too strong for them; and they vented their irritation upon France.

From 1897 it was apparent that an armed conflict, of the Triple Alliance or its two Teutonic partners against the Dual Alliance, was well within the range of possibility. Neither Russia nor France desired a continental war; but their union was the most dangerous obstacle which German and Austrian projects of expansion had hitherto encountered. The one redeeming feature of the situation, from the German point of view, was that England also viewed the Dual Alliance with some

apprehension—as was shown by the fact that the English standard of naval construction was fixed, for some time after 1897, with reference to the combined strength of the French and Russian navies. It was fortunate for France that Germany was encouraged, by the outbreak of the South African War, to develop a new naval policy which could only be explained on the assumption that she intended, sooner or later, to strike directly or indirectly at British interests. The events of the present year, and especially the terms of the now notorious German bid for British neutrality, suggest that the immediate object of the German fleet-laws was to prepare for an attack upon French colonies. But undoubtedly the remoter object was the ruin of the British Empire; and the consciousness of a common danger brought England to the side of France just at the moment when Russia, owing to her war in the Far East with Japan (1904), was incapacitated from helping her ally. In the year 1904 England and France publicly made up their differences on the chief points which had hitherto kept them apart—the question of French fishing rights off Newfoundland, the question of the English occupation of Egypt, the question of French intervention in Morocco.¹ The most important features of the settlement were that the French withdrew their old demand for the evacuation of Egypt by some fixed date;

¹ Two of these disputes were old, the last was of comparatively recent date. France had now become mistress of the hinterlands behind Morocco, and her trade interests in that country had developed. She felt that the time was at hand when she could no longer tolerate the state of anarchy which seemed normal in Morocco. England was the other power largely interested in Moroccan trade, and feared at first that France would find means of excluding all merchants but her own, when Morocco had been made French.

and that the English agreed to leave the French a free hand in Morocco, so long as all nations were permitted to trade there on equal terms, and the Straits of Gibraltar were left open. But these written terms of agreement were of less importance than the silent understanding that it might be desirable, in the near future, for France and England to form a closer alliance.

Since 1904 the Anglo-French Entente has been twice robustly, not to say rudely, tested by the statesmen of the German Empire, who have spared no pains to sow mistrust between the two great colonizing powers. In 1905 and 1911 Morocco served as the pretext. In the first of these years the German Emperor announced that he would not recognize any arrangement concerning Morocco which prevented him from treating directly with the Sultan ; in 1911 a German warship was sent to seize the Moroccan port of Agadir, on the pretext that the safety of German commercial interests was imperilled by the disorders of Morocco. It is probable that Germany coveted Morocco ; a German minister is said to have declared that Agadir, once occupied, would never be evacuated. The country was the most promising of those which still remained to be occupied by some European state. But it is certain that Germany expected England to desert France on each of these occasions, and that such a desertion would have ended the Entente. On each occasion England stood firm, and Germany experienced a diplomatic rebuff which was keenly resented by all German parties except the Socialists. Under cover of the Entente, France was enabled to establish the Protectorate over Morocco, which she had so long desired. Italy and Spain, who next to England were the powers most concerned, have accepted this arrangement ; some arrangement of the kind was

imperative if any Europeans were to continue trading in Morocco.

On the whole Germany had no cause to complain of the terms upon which she was twice allowed to escape from a false position. The dispute of 1905 was adjusted, amicably enough to outward appearance, by the international conference of Algeciras. In 1911 German honour was salved by some French concessions concerning the boundary-line between the French Congo and the Cameroons. Germany, it is true, had demanded much more than she obtained; she had asked for the coast-line of the French Congo, and the territory behind it as far as the river Sangha. But enough was conceded by the French ministry of the day to arouse feelings of lively dissatisfaction in the French legislature. In 1912 the French Government continued the work of conciliation by coming to an arrangement with Germany about the boundaries of Togoland and the French Sudan. But it is clear that, after 1911, if not earlier, the German colonial party came to the conclusion that France was their superior in the art of 'peaceful penetration', and that the short way of establishing a German colonial power was to strip France of her African territories.

France has not been blind to this danger. Like England, she has often, in the past few years, given foreigners the impression of being wholly absorbed in party politics and of wilfully turning her back upon the European situation. But in France, as in England, though party differences are clamorously expressed, there is a broad basis of agreement on which all parties take their stand when the national existence is in question. Whatever have been the quarrels of French politicians in domestic questions, they have worked

harmoniously and unobtrusively against the common foe. They have not done so in any spirit of *Revanche*. They have not boasted, and they have not threatened ; and they have shown their conviction that France was unequal to the task of an aggressive war. It was not until the eleventh hour, in 1913, that they agreed to increase the strength of the army, and to demand three years of military training (instead of two) from every conscript ; and this step was only taken in answer to the sensational German Army Bill of the same year—a Bill, it may be mentioned, which frightened Belgium into adopting universal military service.

Until 1913 the preparations of France were mainly diplomatic. Her Foreign Ministers have been eminently pacific since 1905, when M. Delcassé was relegated to the background as being a statesman too brilliant and original for the national safety. This was no ordinary concession to German susceptibilities ; for M. Delcassé is the most distinguished Foreign Minister whom the Republic has produced. His successors have occupied themselves in clearing up old differences with foreign powers, more particularly with Italy and Spain. In 1906 France and Italy agreed that each would respect and would defend the interests of the other in Ethiopia ; and, significantly enough, both agreed to defend the interests of England in Egypt and in the basin of the Nile. In 1912 France and Italy made a further agreement concerning their interests in Morocco and in Libya ; and in the same year Spain, by the Treaty of Madrid, acquired a protectorate over definite zones in Morocco in exchange for a recognition of the French protectorate over the remainder of the country. The effect of these transactions has been to establish friendly relations between

the three Latin powers of the Western Mediterranean. They have made it clear that they neither invite nor desire the intervention of Germany in their disputes ; Spain and Italy will not allow themselves to be used, as the cats'-paws of German colonial policy, to molest a sister nation. Italy and France will not tolerate a German or an Austrian descent upon the Nile valley. It is to agreements of this kind that German publicists refer when they complain that the German people is being strangled in a network of diplomacy. The complaint will only become justifiable when the right to steal is recognized by European public law.

But these agreements of the Latin peoples among themselves, instructive as they are, only helped France negatively, by releasing her from embarrassments which might have hampered her in a war of life and death. It is to the Entente with Russia and with England that she has looked, and not in vain, for actual support. Until 1909 the weak spot in her armour of alliances was the absence of any direct understanding between her two chief supporters. She had one set of agreements with Russia, another set of agreements with England. She felt that she could certainly depend on Russian help, and that England, though not definitely committed in the same way as Russia, could not afford to stand neutral while French territory or French colonies were being appropriated by another power. But there was no guarantee that England and Russia would work harmoniously together when both were ranged upon the side of France. From 1904 to 1909 it was a leading object of French foreign policy to secure this guarantee. There can be no doubt that French influence was largely responsible for the gradual reconciliation of England and Russia in those years, for the growth of a feeling in

both countries that their Asiatic interests, hitherto the main cause of disputes, were by no means irreconcilable. In 1905 England acted as a mediator between Russia and Japan ; in 1907 England and Russia came to an agreement respecting their claims in Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet. Finally, in 1909, the Tsar paid a ceremonious visit to England ; and from that moment the Triple Entente became a new and vital factor in the European situation. The immediate effect was that France found herself able to concentrate practically the whole of her fleet in the Mediterranean, where it would be ready to defend her North African colonies. For it was understood that, if the three powers found themselves jointly engaged in a war against a common enemy, Russia would guard the interests of her allies in the Baltic, and England would be responsible for holding the North Sea and the English Channel.

There can be no doubt that the Triple Entente has operated as a bar against some cherished hopes of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Since 1909 it has been the fixed intention of Germany, if not also of Austria-Hungary, that France should be made to pay heavily for her presumption in building up this coalition. Apparently Germans think that the Triple Entente exists largely, if not entirely, to thwart German colonial ambitions, and to promote those of France.

To such suspicions we can only answer that no proof of them is offered, and that they are not confirmed by any facts which are generally known. There is evidence that French statesmen have feared a war with Germany as one of the greatest evils that could befall their nation. There is evidence that France has been relatively less prepared than Germany for the present war. We do not contend that France has pursued

a policy of peace at any price ; but the events of 1905 and 1911 are in themselves a proof that she has been prepared to pay a high price to avert the ill will of Germany. In the colonial sphere, as we have shown, France has pursued an active and sometimes an audacious policy. She has quarrelled over colonial questions with other powers besides Germany. But her differences with England, with Italy, with Spain, have been amicably settled by compromises not invariably too favourable to France. Her colonial policy has been one of competition, but not of war to the knife ; and she owes her most brilliant successes not so much to her diplomacy as to the industry of her traders and the self-devotion of her explorers. Her rivals, with one exception, have not found it necessary to remain her enemies, to treat her prosperity and the prosperity of her colonies as an insult and a wrong. Germany is the exception ; and Germany has no reason to complain if France has woven a network of alliances to protect herself against the overt and covert threats to which she has been exposed in the last generation.